

20 *The Gros Ventres of Montana: Part II, Religion*

776 beings as Little Spirit and ghosts, but not such major ones as the Supreme Being and Bha'a.

224 The following story, as told by The Boy, gives nearly all that
776 is known about Little Spirit, etcibatā:t (ête,sā, it is little, bettētō, spirit [Sifton]).

"Long ago, how far back I do not know, Little Spirit made himself the guardian spirit helper of a certain man, saying: 'Whenever there is going to be a famine, call me.' 'What are you?' the man asked, 'Where do you come from?' 'I am Little Spirit, I am from the western wind.' The man who had Little Spirit never called him except when game was scarce and there was danger of famine among the people. Then he would call Little Spirit who would tell them where game was. When this man was dying, he said to the people: 'Whenever you go out hunting, pray to Little Spirit to show you where game is and when you have killed game and gutted it, take a piece of the liver and some of the fat, put in on the west side of the game killed, and say: "Here, Little Spirit, is liver and fat for you." ' It was just that one man of long ago, no other, who had Little Spirit as a personal helper. When Little Spirit came, he came as a little whirlwind.'"¹⁹

Little Spirit was, in accordance with this man's instruction, ordinarily appealed to by the Gros Ventres for success in hunting particularly at times when game was hard to get, and the above-mentioned first fruits sacrifice of liver and fat made to him after game was killed. He was not appealed to on any other occasion.

776 At a number of places in and around Gros Ventres territory are
• [172] cliffs with incised pictographs on them made by a certain class of "false persons" called tciya:tsine:n "ghost men" or "little men." They were never seen but according to Singer were dwarfish, about 3 feet tall. The Gros Ventres distinguish clearly between such pictographs made by these beings on the one hand and on the other those made by Indians or else tracks of animals in flat rocks. The first are temporary, and change from time to time; the other two kinds are permanent. Gros Ventres have tried to get

[114] ¹⁹ He did not, however, come into the shaking tent as the ghost helper did. The statement by Cooper, 1940, based on 1939 field notes, was an error corrected 1940 in the field.

418 *The Gros Ventres of Montana: Part II, Religion*

787 At a number of spots in and around the territory of the Gros
● 192 Ventre are cliffs on which the pictograph beings (supra, p. 20)
made designs that could be interpreted as omens. The Boy
enumerated the following localities where such picture cliffs were
or are: one near Clagett on the Missouri River; another around
Sun River; another southeast of the Sweet Grass Hills; another
far up north in the forested country; another around the mouth
of the Musselshell River; another north of the Musselshell; an-
other north of the Yellowstone (north of where the Crow now
are). Singer also mentioned one not far from Hays. Unfortunately
our time schedule did not permit us to visit any of these spots.

The Gros Ventres explicitly distinguished these drawings from
those recognized as made by Indians and from other somewhat
similar things. Some such designs made by Indians in caves and
on cliffs can be seen today: two, for example, in the Little Rockies,
one on the south side and another on the southeast. Tracks of
animals, "right in the stone," may also be seen: at one place on
top of one end of Snake Butte, some miles east of St. Paul's Mis-
sion. The Gros Ventres do not know what these are.

Likewise, at one end of the Larb Hills, there is a big flat rock
described as about 5 feet by 10, the upper surface of which is about
waist high from the ground. The rock itself is not limestone, sand-
stone, or granite, but of a rarer mineral seen only once in a great
while; of light color, and looking something like cement, and
looking to be "artificial." It was discovered by the Gros Ventres
only in recent times, apparently from the Assiniboine, who found
it on directions given them by some Cree half-breeds. On the
surface of this flat rock are seen tracks in the stone of a child,
of hoofed animals, wolves and dogs, and of animals the Gros
Ventre cannot identify. On one of the vertical sides of the rock
is a dent, shaped like a lodge. The lodge is painted in colors, and
in front of it, at the door side, is the figure of a man standing
with a pipe extended upward. Some young Gros Ventre men have
spit on their hands and tried to rub these lodge colors off, but
without success. On the opposite vertical side of the flat rock are
represented the sun and moon, the Dipper, and some other stars.
The present-day Gros Ventres have tried to divine the meaning

of this rock with its designs, but to no avail. They just say of it ⁷⁸⁷
"it is something holy." They do not know what if anything the ¹⁷²
pictograph beings may have had to do with it.

Before the death by lightning of a certain young man, a drawing was seen, on a pictograph being cliff, of a lodge, and inside a headless man, and a zigzag line to the top of the lodge. In another case some Gros Ventre hunters, recently, when out hunting, were wondering if the pictograph beings still predicted, and so they went to one of their cliffs and there saw so depicted a train, and in front of it a headless man. On their return after their hunting was over, they went to the Agency and there heard that a certain man had been killed by a train. Just in recent times, too, a Gros Ventre band was traveling (not as a war party) to the Crow reservation and being near the pictograph beings cliff at the mouth of the Musselshell, went and looked, and there saw pictured a water monster with long horns and a human being riding on its neck. (One on its head and another on its snout, according to Singer.) They interpreted this to mean: "Someone is going to be drowned." When they reached the Crow, they learned that a Gros Ventre young man had drowned crossing the Yellowstone somewhere near Billings, and the place where the river comes out of the mountains. Singer once saw on one of these cliffs a picture of their camp, with a gun pointing right at the middle of the camp; afterwards a person in the camp did actually get killed.

In general, if someone died from war or drowning or other cause, and a group were discussing the death, it would be said: "The pictograph beings drew and predicted this long ago."

There was relatively little divination among the Gros Ventres ⁷⁸⁷
as compared with the many kinds of it among their Algonquian linguistic kin of the taiga. Scapulimancy was absent; none of a half-dozen or more of our informants to whom we broached the subject had ever heard of it. Scrying occurred in the form of peering into badger blood. When a war party had gone out on the trail, they would kill a badger, lay it on its back, slit it from throat to crotch, and leave the blood to gather in a pool around the belly. Those of the party who wished to peer into the pool of blood did so; but there was no obligation to do so; if some did not wish